

Help Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injury

Help Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injury is a national initiative developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to raise awareness about preventing, recognizing, and responding to fall related traumatic brain injury (TBI) in older adults. The ***Help Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injury*** initiative reaches out to children and caregivers of adults 75 and older with messages to help them understand ways to prevent falls, the leading cause of TBI among older adults, learn the symptoms of TBI in older adults, and how to respond to a TBI should one occur.

TBI is a special health concern for older adults. People ages 75 and older have the highest rates of TBI-related Hospitalizations and death. In addition, they recover more slowly and die more often from these injuries than do younger people.

Nationally

- More than one-third of the adults 65 years and older in the United States fall each year.
- Twenty to 30 percent of people in this age group who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as bruises, hip fractures, or head traumas. These injuries can make it hard to move around and limit independent living. They can also increase the risk of early death.
- Falls are the most common cause of TBI. In 2000, TBI occurred in 46% of fatal falls among older adults.
- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- Approximately 85% of deaths caused by falls in 2004 were among people age 75 years and older.
- People 75 years and older who fall are 4 to 5 times more likely than younger people to be hospitalized in a long-term care facility for a year or longer.

In Virginia

- Between 2001-2005, Virginians 65 and older had higher rates of TBI hospitalizations than any other age group. Eighty percent of the injuries among those 65 and older were attributed to falls.
- Virginians aged 65 and older experienced a higher number of TBI related deaths than any other age group. Over half (51%) of these deaths were the result of a fall.

Traumatic brain injury is a significant health concern for older adults. However, falls and traumatic brain injury can be prevented! During the month of March 2008, the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Injury and Violence Prevention (DIVP) will be raising awareness about fall and Traumatic Brain Injury prevention using radio and transit advertisement. The DIVP has partnered with 2-1-1 VIRGINIA and SeniorNavigator.org to respond to requests for additional information and resources.

2-1-1 VIRGINIA is the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referral (I&R). 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families in need and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. 2-1-1 makes it possible for people in need to navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human services' agencies and programs by making services easier to access. 2-1-1 encourages prevention and fosters self-sufficiency.

SeniorNavigator is a non-profit organization designed to help seniors and caregivers find the health and aging resources available to help. They have over 21,000 programs and services listed on their website (www.seniornavigator.org), as well as hundreds of informative articles. Topics on site include anything a senior or caregiver would need to know: anything from health, legal or financial information—to housing or health facilities—SeniorNavigator has it.

For more information about the VDH campaign, visit www.vahealth.org/civp or contact Leonard Recupero, Community Injury Prevention Coordinator, at leonard.recupero@vdh.virginia.gov or by telephone at 804-864-7734.

Visit the CDC web page www.cdc.gov/braininjuryinseniors for information on the national campaign.

As part of the ***Help Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injury*** initiative, CDC has developed easy-to-use English- and Spanish-language materials for older adults and their caregivers. Each of these materials uses a concise question–and–answer format to provide information that older adults and their caregivers can use to take an active role in preventing, recognizing, and responding to TBI. These materials will be available for download online. It will also be possible to place bulk orders for these materials. Use their [Online Order Form](#) to request any of the materials listed below.

Helping Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injuries

CDC Materials

- **Preventing Traumatic Brain Injury in Older Adults"** (booklet for older adults; English and Spanish)
- **Preventing Traumatic Brain Injury in Older Adults: Information for Family Members and Other Caregivers"** (brochure; English and Spanish)
- **Preventing Traumatic Brain Injury in Older Adults: A Fact Sheet for Family Members and Other Caregivers"** (fact sheet; English and Spanish)
- **Signs and Symptoms of TBI"** Poster (English)
- **Facts about TBI in Older Adults"** Poster (English)
- **Refrigerator Magnet** (lists signs and symptoms of TBI; English)

Fall/TBI Prevention Awareness Campaign Partners/Useful Links

Information and Referral

Dial 2-1-1 anywhere in Virginia - provides a wide variety of free health and human service referrals

www.Seniornavigator.org – online database of available resources and information in Virginia

Virginia Department for the Aging - www.vda.virginia.gov - 1-800-552-3402

Brain Injury Association of Virginia - www.biav.net - 1-800-334-8443

US Administration on Aging - www.aoa.gov

Brain Injury Association of America - www.biausa.org - 1-800-444-6443

Support

Brain Injury Association of Virginia - www.biav.net - 1-800-334-8443

Virginia Caregiver Coalition (*Virginia Department for the Aging*) - 1-800-552-3402

Children of Aging Parents - www.caps4caregivers.org – 1-800-227-7294

National Family Caregivers Association - www.nfcacares.org - 1-800-896-3650

Prevention

Home Safety Council - www.homesafetycouncil.org

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control/TBI & Falls – www.cdc.gov/braininjuryinseniors

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control/Preventing Falls -
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm

American Academy of Family Physicians – www.Familydoctor.org

National Safety Council – www.nsc.org – 1-800-621-7615

Virginia Department of Health, Division of Injury and Violence Prevention – www.vahealth.org/civp